

Issey Miyake *Pleats Please*

Issey Miyake Pleats Please

Dedication

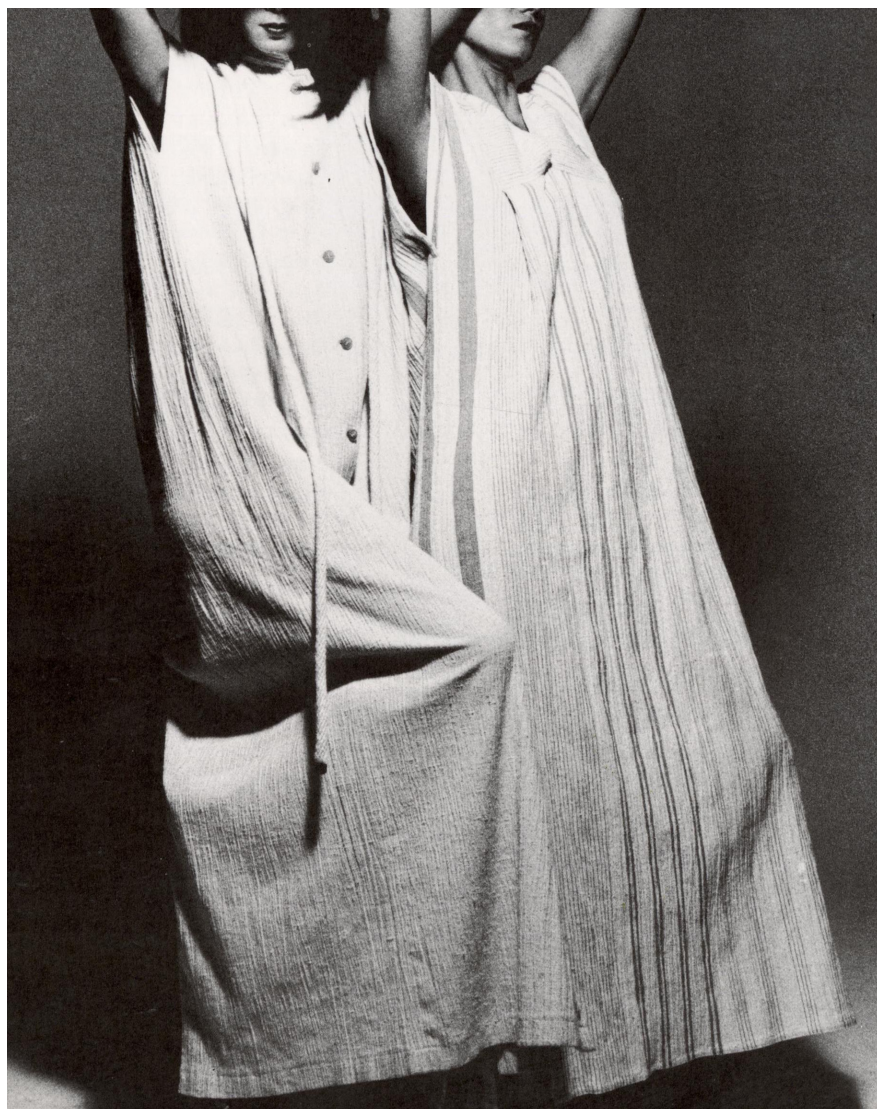
To people who really, really love pleats.

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Foreword

The Tuoko Museum of Contemporary Art has continued to exhibit the creative arts of our age, defined in a wide sense to include design, architecture, and photography in addition to fine arts such as painting and sculpture. We are therefore pleased to offer an exhibition of recent work by Issey Miyake, an artist whose vision has become a vital force both in the field of fashion design and well beyond.

In this exhibition entitled *Pleats Please* each of the works is a pleasing and colorful object in its own right, yet a simple garment that is both functional and fascinating. Their variegated geometrical patterns begin to move the moments the clothes are drawn around the body, and the waves of pleats start to flow, touching the skin and rebounding freely, becoming one with the body.

Issey Miyake began his career in design in 1970. Ever since he has been bringing his original conceptions to bear on traditions of fashion both East and West, drawing new inspiration from practices of 'dress' in a variety of ages and cultures, while pursuing a vision of the ultimate forms of clothing. We will be very happy if we can help everyone share the creative energy and the boundless joy of living conveyed through Miyake's works in clothing.

Let me thank Kazuku Koike and Ikko Tanaka, the members of Miyake Design Studio, and the many others whose valuable advice has made this exhibition possible.

Sukejiro Itani
President, Tuoko Museum
of Contemporary Art



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The Forms of Rhythm

A single line, extended joined by others: what Paul Klee called the “movement of lines,” creates a surface. Against this, imagine the movement of a parting and then compression, turning such a surface into line.

These two strategies are the most elemental principles of the plastic arts, and both been handed down, in silence, since antiquity. Without a knowledge of such principles, we would never have seen the abundant masses of pleats which, for example, enrich the robes of the gods and Buddhas as seen in images from ancient Greece and Rome, to India, China, Korea and Japan.

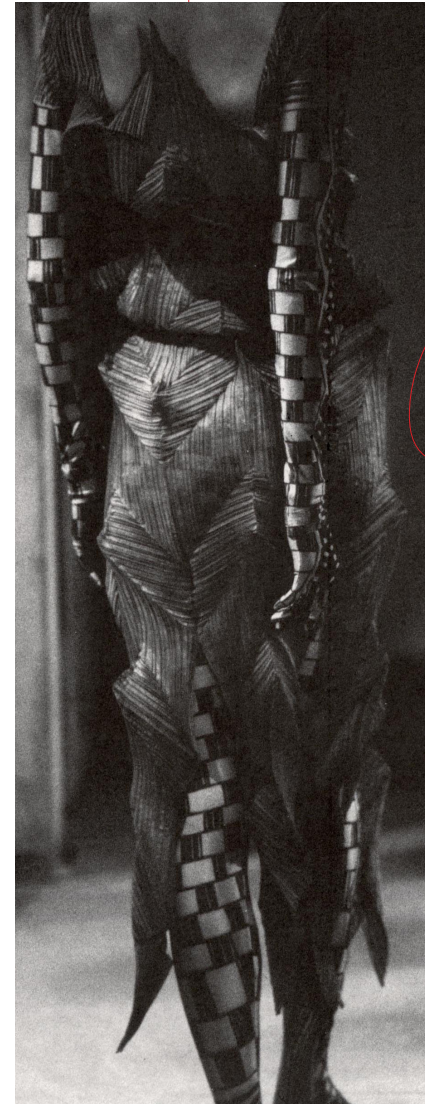
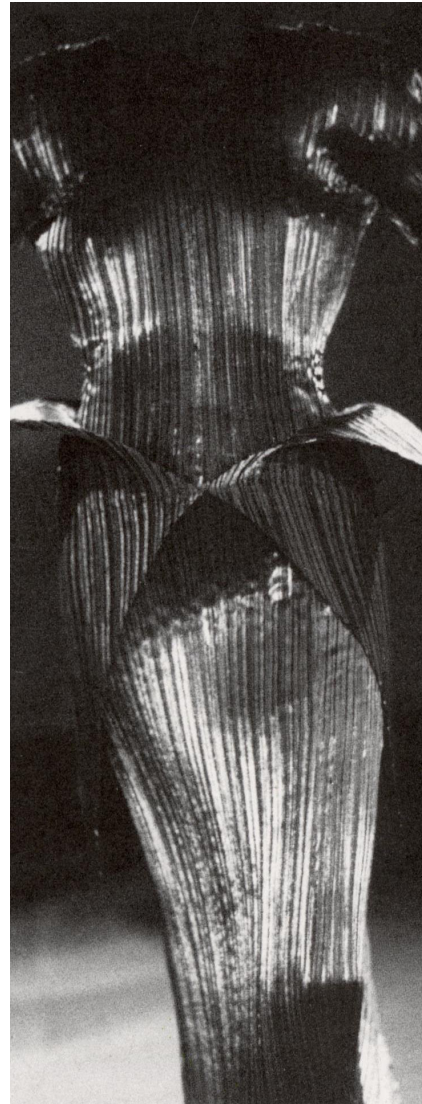
The sculptured artistry of the pleats displayed in Issey Miyake’s *Pleats Please* exhibition have only been made possible through the outstanding relationship developed between Miyake with his

staff members and the finest talent and technology found in Japanese Industry, who would, I feel sure, be chagrined to hear of these allusions to Klee and the robes of Buddhist icons. But, it remains true that Issey Miyake’s pleats invite one to think back upon the original principles of the plastic arts.

I sometimes ask people what their first experience was with pleats. In my case, it was a childhood smock sewn by my mother: narrow pleats tucked together with thread, embroidered with tiny flowers and geometrical patterns; finely colored figures into which I could slip my fingers. That may have been the first time I understood that clothes represent a world of more than simple surfaces.

Flower Pleats,
photo by M. Miyazawa





The original patterns of the home dressmaker's smock can be said to be close to those of English folk dress, setting aside precedents found in the rich and luxurious pleats of fashion history, such as those of old aristocracy.

Again, the skirts of the uniforms worn by most Japanese school girls are heavily pleated. There are differences among schools in the prescribed number of pleats, itself a factor in the identity of each school, and an interesting example of the role of subtle signs in Japanese society. In any case, pleats are what comes to mind for many people when they think of uniforms.

On the other hand, there are those for whom pleats call to mind formal apparel and evening dress, since pleats often adorn the most ornate articles of such clothing: men's dress shirts,

cummerbunds, women's blouse fronts and wedding dresses, each with their different kinds of pleats. In each of these cases, the impression given is of something elaborate and carefully finished, clothes to be worn on special occasions, not at home.

And recall the habitual lavish use of drapes and pleating in the world of haute couture. Why do pleats convey such impressions, I wonder? Surely one answer is due to the fact that pleats require so much manual labor.

Looking back over Issey Miyake's career in design, one can recall the Oniyoryu series of 1972, in which textiles with highly expressive lines made their appearance. These fabrics, tied and washed by hand in the rivers of Niigata in the dead of winter, are deeply textured with pleats.

Colour may be used to evoke a mood of priestly discipline, of work-a-day utilitarianism, or of festive abandon. Any Miyake garment therefore exists in several states. Initially it is as cut and shaped fabric, but this is then modified as the material is draped, wrapped, layered and buttoned over the body to flow with or across the limbs. Finally, and most completely, it reveals itself when those limbs are themselves extended and we slowly become aware of the body not as a corporal presence, but as a being that inhabits air. The sweep of the cloth or gauze describes the movement of that being through space in a manner familiar to us for nearly a hundred years from the multiple exposure photographs made by Marey and Muybridge to show the body in movement.



Pleats Dress,
covered with pleats all
over from apron to bag,
photo by G. Tapie

Jersey Pleats Dress,
with polyester
uretane coating,
photo by E. Sakata



Jersey Pleats Dress,
with polyester
urethane coating,
photo by E. Sakata



Body Pleats,
photo by M. Miyazawa



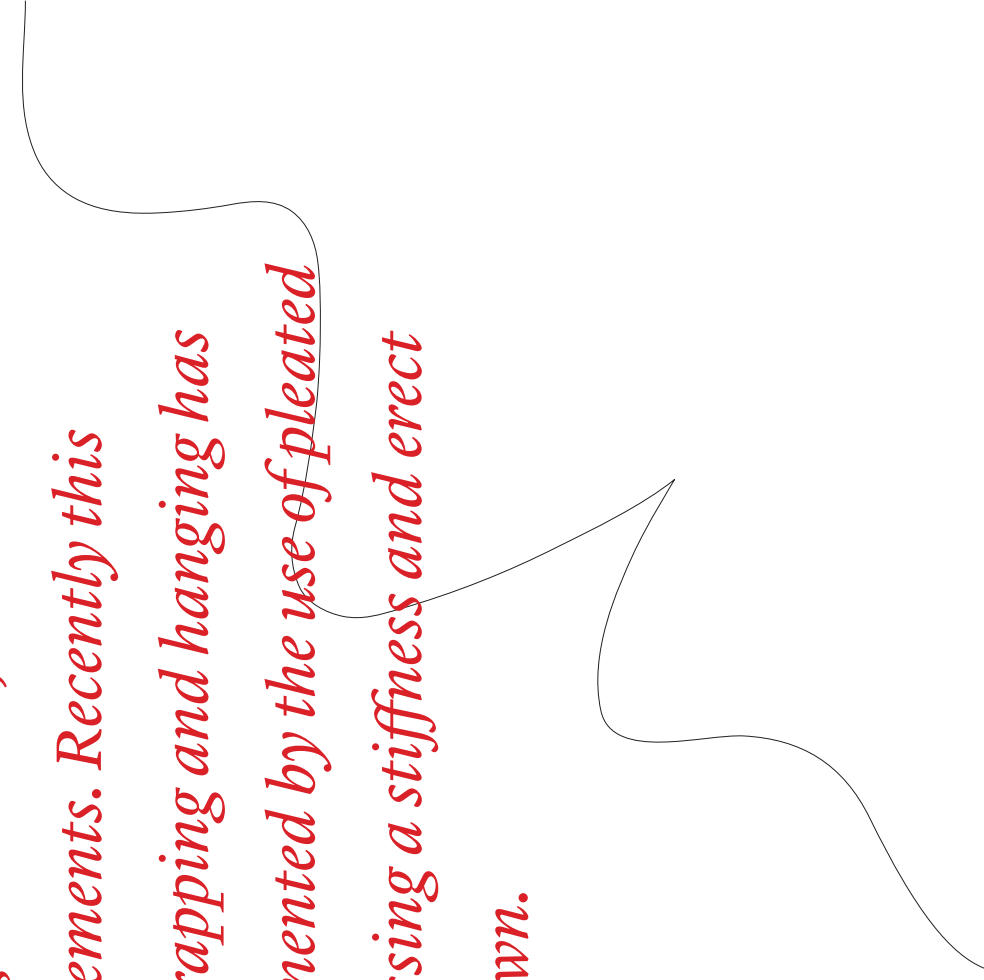
When, and for whom was this art begun? The painful manual labor called for in this traditional technique is symbolic of the luxury of pleats. The pleats dresses shown in 1981 were of jersey, coated with urethane, giving them a remarkable luster, with dramatically deep pleats. These works were the highlight of the exhibition entitled *Bodyworks* (1983); and pleats in the form of banana tree leaves had made their appearance in several collections shown during the intervening years.

These manually produced pleats, with their range of lines in ridges and valleys formed from finely folded material (what I call a “paperized” polyester fiber) are entirely at home in Issey Miyake’s styling. They call to mind the uniquely traditional paper kimonos from Shiraishi in northern Japan.

Looking at the handmade pleats, many will recall the great Venetian design Mariano Fortuny. Fortuny worked in Venice for several decades from the end of the 19th century, designing dresses modeled on an image of the virgin priestess of Delphi. These were prized by women of wealth throughout Europe. Made of the finest silk, carefully hammered into pleats, Fortuny’s dresses were so thin and light that they could be rolled into a ball and held in one hand.

Designed in the form of tubes, they were weighted with glass beads at the hem to give them shape when worn. A product of Venice, Fortuny’s pleats remind me of those in the blouses worn by Arab women.

His clothes therefore assume an identity independent of their wearer. Metaphors for this identity may be found most readily in the world of nature. They are present in the spiral and whorl of a shell, in the waving of reeds in a gentle wind, in the emergence of a chrysalis from its cocoon, or in the bearing wings of a dragonfly. On the body, his clothes either hang directly on the upright frame formed by the head, shoulders, torso, legs, and arms, or are wrapped loosely about the limbs. The body is seen as an organic whole, not as a series of separate elements. Recently this practice of wrapping and hanging has been complemented by the use of pleated fabrics possessing a stiffness and erect line of their own.



Energies,
8 April – 29 July 1990
photo by S. Anzai

Oniyour Yu,
photo by N. Yokosuka



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